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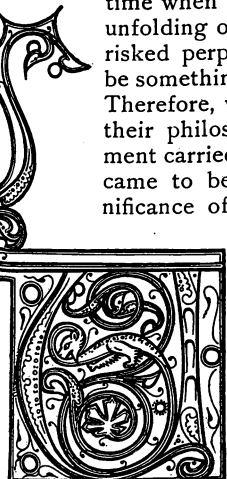
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THE ART OF ILLUMINATION

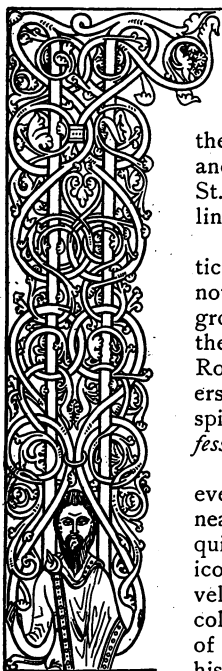
Illumination, as it flourished from the fourth to the sixteenth century, has been the connecting link between ancient and modern schools of painting. From those old missals over which the ancient monks wellnigh put out their eyes in their pious ardor, we may learn a wonderful lesson in the development of art, and we may even follow the progress of an understanding of color, culminating in our modern appreciation. In those good old days a book was never a trifle, and never unworthy of a grand setting. The printing-press had not made possible the reign of the dime novel or the "cloth-bound classic" at nineteen cents. It was a time of primitive methods, but a time when the artist and the artisan did their work well. The unfolding of futurity proved their efforts. The ancients never risked perpetuity of anything not worthy of it, and it had to be something truly splendid to deserve a transcription from them. Therefore, when they chose to inscribe the words of their poets, their philosophers, their orators, or their historians, the compliment carried with it the promise of perfect adornment. So books came to be *illuminated*—that is, to have lavished upon the significance of their texts the grace of ornament, the warmth of color and the richness of gold, silver, and jewels.



UNDER the head of Egyptian papyri we have the earliest specimens of writing, and in them we note that the use of *minium*, or vermilion, in marking the commencement or titles of manuscripts, is of very great antiquity. Furthermore, these same papyri often exhibit mythological figures and symbols in red, blue, green, yellow, and white. We may suppose from what we know of Egyptian practices that the art of illuminating manuscripts was passed to the Greeks, and to the Romans by them, although previous to the Christian era we have no

evidence, I believe, of this mode of writing in Greece or Rome; for in the rolls of papyri recently discovered at Herculaneum, and determined to have been written in Italy during the first half of the first century, there does not exist the slightest trace of ornament, planned or carried out. Nevertheless, if memory serves, both Ovid and Pliny tell us long

before the destruction of Pompeii how the Romans were accustomed to rubricate their manuscripts, and to adorn them with paintings and other ornament more or less elaborate.



N the more ancient manuscripts which have come down to us the red letter was used sparingly, and then only at the beginning of books, or for their titles. Such is the case, for instance, in the Medicean copy of Virgil in the Alexandrian Codex, likewise in the St. Cyprian and St. Augustine, formerly in the monastery of St.-Germain-des Prés, in each of which the first three lines were inscribed with vermillion ink.

How or just where the Greeks acquired the practice of employing gold in their illuminations we do not know. It may have come to them as the outgrowth of experiment, or they may have borrowed the art from India or Egypt. At any rate, the Romans learned it from them, for these gold inscribers—*χρυσογραφοι*, as they were called—were quite conspicuous in their day, and indeed constituted a *profession* in themselves.

The eternal search for that which is new has ever ridden the contentment of civilizations to very near their finish. The ancients were novelty-seekers quite as much as we, their descendants. The old iconographer finally took to dyeing or staining the vellum, upon which he expended his skill, in brilliant colors. Julius Capitolinus refers to this in his Life of the Emperor Maximus (the younger), to whom his mother presented the Poems of Homer done on purple vellum in gold letters. This occurred about the third century, and we know the Codex Argenteus of Ulfilas, done in silver and gold on purple vellum, to have been completed somewhere about 355 A.D.

The initial letters of early manuscripts were not distinguished in size from the others, and indeed they were not to become so until the eighth and eleventh centuries. These were then given over to ornamentation so allegorical and often so illustrative of the text that the holy Benedictines called them *historiées*.

Throughout these early periods the art of illumination followed Grecian models very closely. Indeed, the styles were quite set, and it is somewhat surprising that the Irish illuminators should have been able to defy tradition and evolve a school of their own. However, one need never wonder at Hibernian originality, and the Durham Book of the eighth century, and others, also the lost gospels of Kildare, seen by Giraldus Cambrensis, and then described by him, and prob-

ably of the sixth century, prove that they did. Their work is noticeable for its extreme intricacy, its interlacings of knots arranged in diagonal or square forms, and for the interspersing of grotesque animals. These Irish illuminators were wonderful workers, and if their embellishments were bizarre, they were always very splendid, and awaken intense admiration. They introduced a fashion of running lines of red dots around the larger letters and about the initials and ornamental borders, giving them added richness.



Y the solid patronage which Charlemagne and also Charles the Bold, his grandson, gave to illuminators, the art so flourished and kept up so vigorously that the eighth and the ninth centuries

comprise the golden age of illumination, at least as far as production is concerned. The Bible of Charlemagne, extant and now preserved at St. Paul's Church in Rome, is probably the greatest piece of illumination ever produced.

Borders distinguish the illuminated manuscripts of the eleventh century, and those of the twelfth century are remarkable for their profusion of ornament.

About this latter period scribes probably found that the world was moving just a little faster than ever before they had thought it could—and more's the pity! for they began to copy manuscripts, leaving places to be filled in *afterward* by the illuminator. As the two arts, that of the scribe and that of the painter, never kept apace, many of these places were never filled in, and we have hundreds of manuscripts where this state of affairs makes us regret that of which haste robbed us.

In the thirteenth century, for some reason never satisfactorily guessed at, the art of illumination deteriorated somewhat, but the



fourteenth century found it back once more where it belonged. When, in the fifteenth century, the art of printing made the rapid strides toward perfection as subsequently attained, illuminators found their vocations but recalled by tradition. So much, then, for some idea of the history of illumination. Its practice can only be guessed at,

generally speaking, for those brilliant reds and blues, and the gold which has the appearance of gilded glass, reflecting as any mirror, have defied the investigations of colorist and chemist. We can only experiment and guess and hope a little now and then by way of palliation.

During the middle of the present century there came a great revival in interest in illumination; but unfortunately it was taken up in practice by young ladies' seminaries, and after suffering their attempts, the public gave up illumination a while longer. Some of these old things are really curious and entertaining, now that age has mellowed

their mediocrity, and the writer has by him a book of sermons "done" by one Letetia Mabin, in cabbage roses, that would even be a puzzle to a Chinese artist. The revival of fine book-making has been the means and is responsible for the splendid examples of illumination done in the present decade.

To begin with, the illuminator has always to suit his pigments to the paper of the book of his selection, and exercise care in employing colors he knows to be fugitive. There are two ways of working—in the transparent and in the opaque colors. Winsor & Newton's water-colors are the best, and gouache where opaque color is desired. If one is to illuminate a book already printed, the ornament should be sketched in carefully with a pencil (H in hardness), after which with a crow-quill pen these lines should be gone over in vermilion ink or indigo. When

SCS DUNSTANVS:



these have dried, the color is filled in, wash over wash (except on parchment, vellum, or Japanese paper), each one being allowed to get quite dry before another is laid. Finally the gold is applied. When leaf gold or shell gold is used, where either is intended to be burnished, it should be applied *before* the color, as some colors—emerald green, for instance—scratch the gold and the burnisher by reason of their metallic properties. Unburnished gold has an artistic quality not appreciated by every one, but it is becoming used more and more every day, as it can be gotten in a very convenient form—in “shells.”

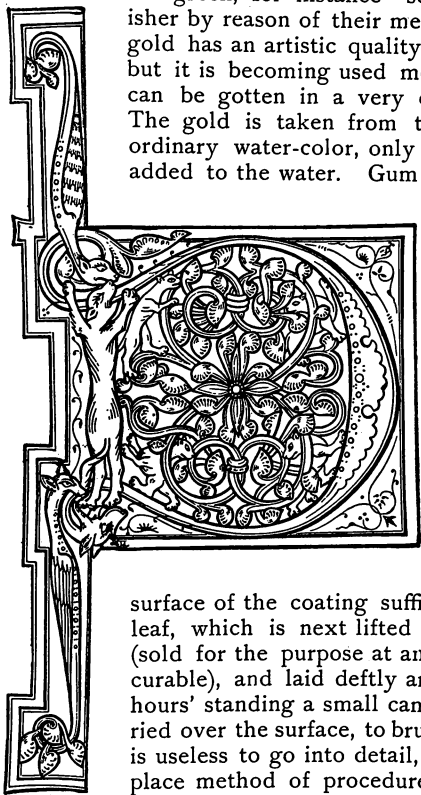
The gold is taken from the shells after the manner of ordinary water-color, only a little gum arabic should be added to the water. Gum water will also give brilliancy

to color when applied with it as a medium. It is difficult to learn to handle leaf gold, and facility comes only with practice and experiment. Winsor & Newton prepare an excellent gold matt-size, which is much used by those who have looked into illumination. It is put on as any water-color, only the wash must be thin. When this is thoroughly dry, breathe upon it. This moisture from the breath makes the

surface of the coating sufficiently sticky to hold the gold leaf, which is next lifted by a camel's-hair gilder's tip (sold for the purpose at any shop where brushes are procurable), and laid deftly and smoothly down. After two hours' standing a small camel's-hair brush should be carried over the surface, to brush off all superfluous gold. It is useless to go into detail, for beyond the mere commonplace method of procedure, the rest comes with “trying it.” Various pigments for “raising” the gold are on the

market, but the writer believes raised grounds are not in keeping with the spirit of modern illuminations, and he has only employed them in examples after the styles of the early centuries.

Several books are now to be had for no very extravagant sum, the designs in which may have their elegance greatly enhanced by coloring them. In such work Miss Victoria Cordew of London has made a name for herself, as likewise has Mrs. W. Irving Way of Chicago. In original designing and illuminating Evaleen Stein, the



poetess, has done some remarkable things. Chicago artists are especially fortunate in having always with them the collection of early illuminated missals in the museum of the Newberry Library. This collection is very representative, and it is one of the best in the world.

Under this caption has been said here what is merely suggestive of the things which may be done in this delightful field, one whose daisies have not been downtrodden by a multitude.

GARDNER C. TEALL.



WOMEN IN THE ART CRAFTS

The unwillingness of the girl student to turn her attention to anything less than high art is gradually being overcome, and the distance between artist and artisan is surely becoming less. To emphasize the dignity of labor in this last direction, the late William Morris and Sir Edward Burne-Jones worked in the minor arts. It is not so very long ago that women began to study art as a profession. A few women, it is true, painted in water-colors as a diversion, but the prejudice against professions for women had to be overcome, and the idea finally take root that a girl who does not marry, or desires to earn her living, needs some stated occupation. Now women painters and art students are so numerous that one wonders when there were none.

Women are succeeding in the arts and crafts, and more would do well to turn their attention to these less ambitious forms of art. The societies of decorative art have done much to bring this about. They were an outgrowth of the societies of English women at the Centennial Exposition. The founding of a society in New York for the encouragement of artistic industries was a great success. It embraced all branches of art appropriate to the various circumstances of women. Classes in drawing, embroidery, and china-painting became the rage. Later the Society of Associated Artists was formed for the purpose of adapting art education to the various manufactures. This led to designing for silks, printed cottons, and wall-paper. To-day there are hundreds of women designers, and American art has been adopted by manufacturers and buyers.

The impetus toward the study of art crafts in this country and others touches not alone paper and textiles, but metals, plaster, wood, etc., all of which are benefited by artistic manipulation. This movement in America has not only enhanced the value of our manufacture, but increases our interchange of commerce.

Artistic wood-carving secured its first distinct recognition as woman's work in 1872, when samples were on exhibition at Cincinnati. Much interest was aroused, and a practical art department was established. Etching and hammered work in metal were added. No